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US is running out of money for Ukraine and that could hinder fight against Russia, White House warns

By Zeke Miller
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Monday sent Congress an urgent warning about the need to approve tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to Ukraine, saying Kyiv's war effort to defend itself from Russia's invasion may grind to a halt without it.

In a letter to House and Senate leaders and released publicly, Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young warned the U.S. will run out of funding to send weapons and assistance to Ukraine by the end of the year, saying that would "kneecap" Ukraine on the battlefield.

Continued on Page 2



Office of Management and Budget director Shalanda Young speaks about the possible government shutdown during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington, Friday, Sept. 29, 2023.

(AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

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US is running out of money for Ukraine and that could hinder fight against Russia, White House warns

Continued from Front

She added that the U.S. already has run out of money that it has used to prop up Ukraine's economy, and "if Ukraine's economy collapses, they will not be able to keep fighting, full stop."

"We are out of money — and nearly out of time," she wrote. President Joe Biden has sought a nearly \$106 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other needs, but it has faced a difficult reception on Capitol Hill. There is growing skepticism about the magnitude of assistance for Ukraine and even Republicans supportive of the funding are insisting on U.S.-Mexico border policy changes to halt the flow of migrants as a condition for the assistance.

"Congress has to decide whether to continue to support the fight for freedom in Ukraine as part of the 50-nation coalition that President Biden has built, or whether Congress will ignore the lessons we've learned from history and let (Russian President Vladimir) Putin prevail," National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Monday. "It is that simple. It is that stark choice, and we hope that Congress on a bipartisan basis will make the right choice."

But negotiations over the border security package



A man uses plastic to cover a broken window in his apartment following a Russian drone attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday, Nov. 25, 2023.

(AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File)

broke down over the week-end as Republicans insisted on provisions Democrats said are draconian, aides said. Talks are expected to resume this week.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Monday that his party is "still at the table."

Congress already has allocated \$111 billion to assist Ukraine, including \$67 billion in military procurement funding, \$27 billion for economic and civil assistance and \$10 billion for humanitarian aid.

Young wrote that all of it, other than about 3% of the

military funding, had been depleted by mid-November. Meanwhile, the GOP-controlled House has passed a standalone assistance package for Israel as it fights the war with Hamas in Gaza, but the White House has maintained that all of the priorities must be met.

The Biden administration has said it has slowed the pace of some military assistance to Kyiv in recent weeks to try to stretch supplies until Congress approves more funding.

"We are out of money to support Ukraine in this fight,"

Young wrote. "This isn't a next year problem. The time to help a democratic Ukraine fight against Russian aggression is right now. It is time for Congress to act."

House Speaker Mike Johnson reiterated in a statement Monday that House Republicans will insist on border policy changes as part of a Ukraine assistance bill, and he argued Biden has "failed to substantively address any of my conference's legitimate concerns about the lack of a clear strategy in Ukraine, a path to resolving the conflict, or a plan

for adequately ensuring accountability for aid provided by American taxpayers."

The letter followed a classified Capitol Hill briefing on Nov. 29 for the top House and Senate leaders on the need for the assistance. Defense and other national security officials briefed the "big four" congressional leaders.

"They were clear that Ukraine needs the aid soon — and so does our military need the aid soon," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told The Associated Press in an interview at the time.

Schumer said Monday that both Republicans and Democrats in his chamber agree on funding for Ukraine, as well as Israel, but that the funding has been halted for weeks by GOP demands that border security policy be included in a final package. Schumer, a New York Democrat, said Republicans have pressed for "indefinite detention" of asylum seekers and granting the executive branch power to "shut down" the asylum system, measures that Democrats say go too far.

He is expected to push forward Biden's supplemental funding package this week, but Republicans are threatening to block its passage with a filibuster as they insist on border security provisions. □



Joan Donovan, then-research director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, speaks remotely during a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, on Capitol Hill, April 27, 2021, in Washington.

(AI Drago/Pool Photo via AP, File)

By Frank Bajak

Associated Press

Whistleblower allegation: Harvard muzzled disinfo team after \$500 million Zuckerberg donation

(AP) - A prominent disinformation scholar who left Harvard University in August has accused the school of muzzling her speech and stifling — then dismantling — her research team as it launched a deep dive in late 2021 into a trove of Facebook files she considers the most important documents in internet history.

The actions impacting Joan Donovan's work coincided with a \$500 million donation to Harvard by a foun-

dation run by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan. In a whistleblower disclosure made public Monday, Donovan seeks investigations into "inappropriate influence" from Harvard's general counsel, the Massachusetts attorney general's office and the U.S. Department of Education. The CEO of Whistleblower Aid, a legal nonprofit supporting Donovan, called the alleged behavior by

Harvard's Kennedy School and its dean a "shocking betrayal" of academic integrity at the elite school.

"Whether Harvard acted at the company's direction or took the initiative on their own to protect (Facebook's) interests, the outcome is the same: corporate interests are undermining research and academic freedom to the detriment of the public," CEO Libby Liu said in a press statement. □

Former career US diplomat charged with secretly spying for Cuban intelligence for decades

By Joshua Goodman and Eric Tucker

Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A former career American diplomat was charged Monday with serving as a secret agent for communist Cuba going back decades in what prosecutors portrayed as one of the most brazen and long-running betrayals in the history of the U.S. foreign service.

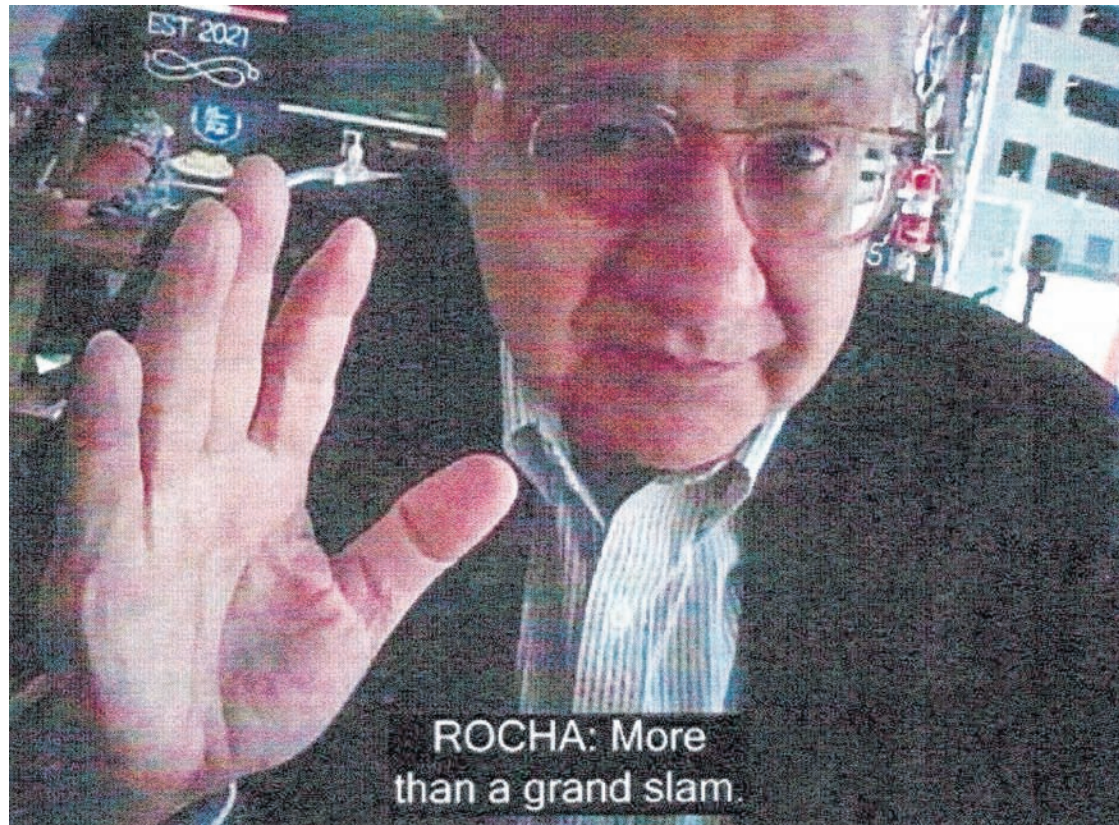
Manuel Rocha wept as he sat handcuffed in Miami federal court on charges that he engaged in "clandestine activity" on Cuba's behalf since at least 1981 — the year he joined the U.S. foreign service — including by meeting with Cuban intelligence operatives and providing false information to U.S. government officials about his contacts.

The complaint is short on specifics of how Rocha may have assisted Cuba. But it provides a vivid case study of what American officials say are long-standing efforts by Cuba and its notoriously sophisticated intelligence services to target U.S. government officials who can be flipped.

"This action exposes one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the United States government by a foreign agent," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "To betray that trust by falsely pledging loyalty to the United States while serving a foreign power is a crime that will be met with the full force of the Justice Department."

The 73-year-old Rocha, whose two-decade career as a U.S. diplomat included top posts in Bolivia, Argentina and the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, was arrested by the FBI at his Miami home Friday. He was ordered held following Monday's brief court appearance pending a bond hearing Wednesday. His attorney declined to comment.

The Justice Department did not reveal how Rocha attracted the attention of Cuba's intelligence op-



This image provided by the Justice Department and contained in the affidavit in support of a criminal complaint, shows Manuel Rocha during a meeting with a FBI undercover employee.

(Justice Department via AP)

eratives nor did it describe what, if any, sensitive information he may have provided while working for the State Department and in a lucrative post-government career that included a stint as a special adviser to the commander of U.S. Southern Command.

Instead, the case relies largely on what prosecutors say were Rocha's own admissions, made over the past year to an undercover FBI agent posing as a Cuban intelligence operative named "Miguel."

Rocha praised the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro as "Comandante," branded the U.S. the "enemy" and bragged about his service for more than 40 years as a Cuban mole in the heart of U.S. foreign policy circles, the complaint says.

"What we have done ... it's enormous ... more than a Grand Slam," he was quoted as saying at one of several secretly recorded conversations.

To cover his tracks, Rocha referred to Cuba as "the island" and led a "normal life" disguised as a "right-wing person," he said in one of the recordings. Former colleagues and friends described Rocha as a vocal admirer of former Presi-

dent Donald Trump, who took a hard line on Cuba. John Feeley, who ended a long diplomatic career serving as U.S. ambassador to Panama, said he was surprised how his mentor, who had served administrations of both parties, had so fully embraced Trump's politics. "It is beyond ironic that he cultivated this cartoonish persona," he said, "and that everyone apparently bought it."

Washington and Havana restored diplomatic relations in late 2014 after a half-century of Cold War acrimony, though the Trump administration reimposed sanctions on Cuba and, in 2021, redesignated it a state sponsor of terrorism. The Biden administration has moved more gingerly to restore some Obama-era concessions.

The charging document traces Rocha's illegal ties to Cuba to well after his departure from the federal government, when he took on lucrative private sector jobs — most recently as a senior business adviser to an international public relations firm and prominent U.S. law firm.

The FBI learned about the relationship last year and arranged a series of un-

dercover encounters in discrete locations — a church and outdoor food court — in downtown Miami. Rocha deliberately strayed from the most-direct route to those encounters, pausing along the way in what prosecutors allege was classic, counter-surveillance "tradecraft" taught by Cuba's spymasters.

"It's what I've always been told to do," Rocha told the undercover agent at one of those meetings.

At another meeting, Rocha referred to Cuba shooting down two unarmed planes sent by the Miami-based group of exiles, Brothers to the Rescue, in which four opponents of Castro's government were killed in 1996. There's no indication in the complaint that Rocha aided the Cubans with the military operation — a major flashpoint in more than a half-century of brinkmanship between the communist-ruled island and its right-wing opponents in Miami. But at the time he served as a senior political officer at the U.S. special interest section in Havana.

"I lived through it, because I was in charge," Rocha was quoted as saying. "That was a time of a lot of tension." Rocha's service

to Cuba may have gone back even earlier than the start of his U.S. diplomatic career.

The complaint cites Rocha telling the undercover agent that he first proved his loyalty in Chile in 1973 — the year Gen. Augusto Pinochet, with U.S. backing, overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende.

"They must have told you something because you mentioned Chile," Rocha told the undercover agent, who presented himself as having reached out to him at the request of higher-ups in Cuba's National Intelligence Directorate. "That inspired trust in me."

Born in Colombia, Rocha was raised in a working-class home in New York City and obtained a succession of liberal arts degrees from Yale, Harvard and Georgetown before joining the foreign service.

He was the top U.S. diplomat in Argentina between 1997 and 2000 as a decade-long currency stabilization program backed by Washington was unraveling under the weight of huge foreign debt, triggering a political crisis that would see the South American country cycle through five presidents in two weeks.

At his next post, as ambassador to Bolivia, he intervened directly in the 2002 presidential race, warning weeks ahead of the vote that the U.S. would cut off assistance to the poor South American country if it were to elect former coca grower Evo Morales.

The comments backfired, angered Bolivians and boosted support for Morales, who joked that Rocha was his "best campaign chief." When Morales was finally elected three years later, the leftist leader expelled Rocha's successor as chief of the diplomatic mission for inciting "civil war." Rocha also served in Italy, Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and worked as a Latin America expert for the National Security Council. □

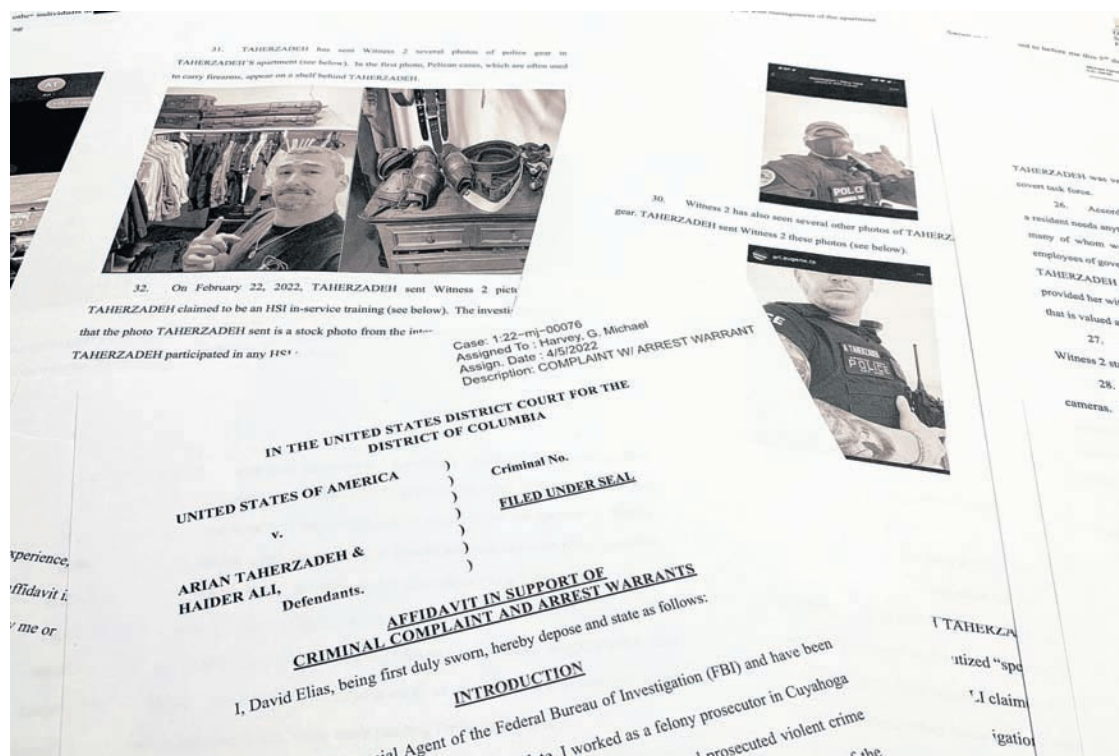
Man who posed as agent and offered gifts to Secret Service sentenced to nearly 3 years

By Lindsay Whitehurts
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man accused of pretending to be a federal agent and offering gifts and free apartments to Secret Service officers has been sentenced to nearly three years in prison. Arian Taherzadeh, 41, was sentenced to 33 months in prison Friday. He and a second man, Haider Ali, were indicted in April 2022, accused of tricking actual Secret Service officers, offering expensive apartments and gifts to curry favor with law enforcement agents, including one agent assigned to protect the first lady, prosecutors said.

Ali, 36, was sentenced in August to over five years. Attorneys for the two did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment Monday.

Prosecutors alleged Taherzadeh falsely claimed, at various times, to be an agent with the Department of Homeland Security, a former U.S. Air Marshal, and a former U.S. Army Ranger. He used his supposed law-



The affidavit to support the arrest of Arian Taherzadeh and Haider Ali is photographed on April 6, 2022.

(AP Photo/Jon Elswick, File)

enforcement work to trick owners of three apartment complexes into letting him use multiple apartments and parking spaces for fake operations, the Justice Department said in a statement. Taherzadeh pleaded guilty to conspiracy, a federal offense, as well as two Dis-

trict of Columbia offenses: unlawful possession of a large-capacity ammunition feeding device and voyeurism. He was also ordered to pay restitution of more than \$700,000.

The case was thrust into the public spotlight when more than a dozen FBI agents

raided a luxury apartment building in southwest Washington in April 2022. They found a cache of gear, including body armor, guns and surveillance equipment, as well as a binder with information about the building's residents, prosecutors said. Taherzadeh also

installed surveillance cameras in his apartment and made explicit content that he showed to others, prosecutors said.

Taherzadeh provided Secret Service officers and agents with rent-free apartments — including a penthouse worth over \$40,000 a year — as well as electronics, authorities said. In one instance, Taherzadeh offered to purchase a \$2,000 assault rifle for a Secret Service agent who is assigned to protect the first lady, prosecutors said.

The plot unraveled when the U.S. Postal Inspection Service began investigating an assault involving a mail carrier at the apartment building and the men identified themselves as being part of a phony Homeland Security unit they called the U.S. Special Police Investigation Unit. Taherzadeh's lawyer has previously said he provided the luxury apartments and lavish gifts because he wanted to be friends with the agents, not try to compromise them. □

Pilots flying tourists over national parks face new rules. None are stricter than at Mount Rushmore



Visitors take in the massive sculpture carved into Mount Rushmore at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023, in, Keystone, S.D.

(AP Photo/David Zalubowski, File)

By Heather Hollingsworth
Associated Press

Fewer planes and helicopters will be flying tourists over Mount Rushmore and other national monuments and parks as new regula-

tions take effect that are intended to protect the serenity of some of the most beloved natural areas in the United States.

The air tours have pitted tour operators against

visitors frustrated with the noise for decades, but it has come to a head as new management plans are rolled out at nearly two dozen national parks and monuments.

One of the strictest yet was recently announced at Mount Rushmore and Badlands National Park, where tour flights will essentially be banned from getting within a half mile of the South Dakota sites starting in April.

"I don't know what we're going to be able to salvage," complained Mark Schlaefli, a co-owner of Black Hills Aerial Adventures who is looking for alternative routes.

The regulations are the result of a federal appeals court finding three years ago that the National Park Service and the Federal

Aviation Administration failed to enforce a 2000 law governing commercial air tours over the parks and some tribal lands. A schedule was crafted for setting rules, and many are wrapping up now.

But now an industry group is eying litigation, and an environmental coalition already has sued over one plan. The issue has grown so contentious that a congressional oversight hearing is planned for Tuesday. Critics argue that the whirr of chopper blades is drowning out the sound of birds, bubbling lava and babbling brooks. That in turn disrupts the experiences of visitors and the tribes who call the land around the parks home.

"Is that fair?" asked Kristen Brengel of the National

Parks Conservation Association, noting that visitors on the ground far outnumber those overhead. "I don't think so."

The air operators argue they provide unrivaled access, particularly to the elderly and disabled.

"Absolutely exhilarating, a thrilling experience" is how Bailey Wood, a spokesman for the Helicopter Association International, described them.

Sightseeing flights got their start in the 1930s as crews building the massive Hoover Dam on the Arizona-Nevada border asked the helicopter pilots working on the project to give their families flyovers, Wood said.

"It took off from there," he said, jokingly adding, "Sorry, aviation pun." □

UK unveils tough new rules designed to cut immigrant numbers

By Jill Lawless

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government announced tough new immigration rules Monday that it says will reduce the number of people able to move to the U.K. each year by hundreds of thousands.

Home Secretary James Cleverly said he was taking "robust action" to lower authorized immigration, which hit a record level of almost 750,000 people in 2022. Critics said the moves would leave overstretched sectors like health and social care at a breaking point.

Under the new rules, immigrants will have to earn more to get a work visa and will find it harder to bring family members to the U.K.

Cleverly said that from the spring of 2024, prospective immigrants will have to earn 38,700 pounds (\$48,900) to get a skilled worker visa, up from 26,200 pounds (\$33,000) now. British citizens who want to bring their foreign spouse to Britain will have to earn the same amount — almost double the current threshold.

Health and social care, sectors that are highly reliant on immigrant staff, are exempt from the salary rule. But care workers from overseas will no longer be able to bring dependent relatives with them to Brit-



Britain's Home Secretary James Cleverly leaves 10 Downing Street following a cabinet meeting in London, Wednesday, Nov. 22, 2023.

(AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

ain, leading to concerns in the industry that fewer will want to come.

The government also said it would scrap a rule that lets employers in sectors on a "shortage occupation list" pay immigrant workers 20% less than U.K. citizens.

Starting in January, most foreign graduate students also will no longer be able to bring family members to the U.K.

Cleverly said the new measures would reduce by 300,000 the number of people eligible to move to Britain in future years.

Revised figures released

last month by the Office for National Statistics said net migration to the U.K. — the number of people arriving minus those leaving — was a record 745,000 in 2022. Net migration in the 12 months to June 2023 decreased to 672,000.

Reducing immigration is a totemic issue for many in the governing Conservative Party, who backed Britain's exit from the European Union in order to "take back control" of the country's borders.

Britain left the bloc in 2020, ending the automatic right of citizens from the 27 EU

nations to live and work in the U.K. Since then the number of visas issued for people to come to Britain for work or study has soared. The country has also taken in hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war in Ukraine and the Chinese government's crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong. The 2022 immigration figure is three times the pre-Brexit level. The Conservatives believe cutting immigration will shore up votes ahead of an election next year, because many voters see immigrants as adding to

pressure on already overstretched public services and worsening a housing crisis.

But many economists say immigrants are needed to fill essential jobs — especially in health care and in low-paid social care roles — and that they contribute more to the economy than they receive.

Christina McAnea, general-secretary of the Unison trade union, said the measures would be a "total disaster" for health and the care sector.

"Migrant workers were encouraged to come here because both sectors are critically short of staff. Hospitals and care homes simply couldn't function without them," she said. "Migrants will now head to more welcoming countries, rather than be forced to live without their families."

Opposition Labour Party immigration spokeswoman Yvette Cooper said the government had failed to train U.K. workers to fill key jobs.

"Where is the workforce plan on social care, on engineering, on bricklaying, on all shortage occupations that their total economic failure has left us with?" she said.

The government is also under pressure to meet its own goal of stopping unauthorized asylum-seekers arriving on small boats across the English Channel. □

Argentina's outgoing government rejects EU-Mercosur trade deal, but incoming administration backs it

Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina

(AP) — Argentina's outgoing government said Monday it won't support the signing of a long-delayed trade deal between the European Union and the South American bloc Mercosur during a summit this week in Brazil even though the incoming Argentine government has expressed support for the deal.

Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero said the agreement

as currently written would restrict Argentinian exports. "It is a bad agreement that has a negative impact on manufacturing and agricultural exports," Cafiero said in an interview with a local radio station, excerpts of which were later released by the Argentine Foreign Ministry. Argentina's position goes against that of neighbor Brazil, which holds the presidency of Mercosur, and Spain, which holds the presidency of the

EU. Both have expressed a desire to move forward with the trade treaty during the summit Thursday in Rio de Janeiro. The Argentine opposition may be short-lived, though. The incoming administration of Argentina's President-elect Javier Milei has already made clear it supports the agreement. Milei takes office Sunday.

"We have no objections; it is frankly desirable that it goes through," incoming Foreign



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, left, and Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez, exchange folders during a meeting at the government house in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

(AP Photo/Natasha Pisarenko, File)

Minister Diana Mondino said at a conference for the Industrial Organization of Argentina,

a manufacturing trade group. "Much better to have it than not to have it." □

Guinea-Bissau's president issues a decree dissolving the opposition-controlled parliament

By Chinedu Asadu and Sambu Asana

Associated Press

BISSAU, Guinea-Bissau (AP)

— Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embaló issued a decree Monday dissolving the nation's opposition-controlled parliament, less than six months after it was reconstituted following a similar move by the president in 2022.

Embaló cited last week's shootout between troops loyal to him and forces controlled by the parliament, which he described as a failed coup.

"The date for holding the next legislative elections will be set in due time in accordance with the provisions of ... the Constitution," the decree stated. "This Presidential Decree comes into force immediately."

On Monday night, Embaló deployed soldiers at the headquarters of the state television and radio as he sought to change the heads of the broadcast stations said to be loyal to the parliament. "Everything is going well in Bissau," the nation's leader said as he attempted to allay fears of yet another political crisis in the capital city. "Demo-



Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embaló speaks at the Peace Forum on Nov. 11, 2022 in Paris.

(AP Photo/Christophe Ena, Pool, File)

cratic achievements are respected and maintained." The new executive order referred to the "seriousness" of last week's shootout in the capital, Bissau, between members of the Presidential Palace Battalion and the National Guard as the former tried to rearrest two ministers under investigation for alleged corruption who had been released from custody by

the latter.

The leadership of the parliament rejected the president's decree Monday, noting that the constitution states that parliament cannot be dissolved in the first 12 months after an election.

"If this situation happens, regardless of the mechanism used, we are in the presence of a subversion of the democratic order

or a constitutional coup d'état," Domingos Simões Pereira, president of the parliament, told reporters. It is the second time in less than two years that Embaló has dissolved the parliament. Three months after surviving a coup attempt in February 2022, the Guinea-Bissau leader did the same thing, citing "unresolvable differences" with the legislature.

Guinea-Bissau's semi-presidential system limits the president's powers by allowing the majority party in the parliament to appoint the Cabinet. As a result, the National Guard — which is under the Ministry of Interior — is largely controlled by the opposition-dominated parliament, while the Presidential Palace Battalion is loyal to Embaló.

Embaló, a former army general, was declared the winner of a December 2019 runoff presidential election, which his opponent contested. Tensions have remained between him and the coalition of opposition groups that won the majority in Guinea-Bissau's parliament in June when the parliament was reconstituted. Last week's shooting incident lasted from Thursday night until Friday morning and happened while the president was attending the U.N. climate summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Upon his return, he dismissed Victor Tchongo, the head of the National Guard and said Tchongo hadn't acted alone when he asked members of the guard to release the officials. □



Nigeriens, some holding Russian flags, participate in a march called by supporters of coup leader Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani in Niamey, Niger, on July 30, 2023.

By Chinedu Asadu

Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP)

— Niger's junta on Monday scrapped two key military agreements that the West African nation signed with the European Union to help fight the violence in Af-

rica's Sahel region as the country's army leaders and a senior Russian defense official discussed military cooperation. Before the coup that deposed the country's president, Mohamed Bazoum, Niger had been the West and Europe's last ma-

Niger's junta revokes key security agreements with EU and turns to Russia for defense partnership

for security partner in the Sahel, the vast region south of the Sahara Desert that Islamic extremist groups have turned into the global terror hot spot.

In a memo, Niger's foreign affairs ministry said the government has decided to "withdraw the privileges and immunities granted" under the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger that was launched in February and consequently "has no legal obligation" related to that partnership.

It also dismissed the EU Civilian Capacity-Building Mission established in 2012 to strengthen Niger's internal

security sector, effectively revoking its approval for the missions. The developments are the latest in growing political tensions between Niger and the EU since the July coup. In a rare visit on Sunday, a Russian delegation led by Russia's Deputy Minister of Defense Lounous-Bek Evkourov met with Niger's junta leader, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, and Minister of State for National Defense Salifou Mody. The two sides held more meetings on Monday to discuss military and defense issues. "At the center of the discussions is the strengthening of

cooperation between the two countries in the field of defense," Niger's defense ministry said in a statement. Most of Niger's foreign economic and security allies have sanctioned the country, including France, which had 1,500 troops operating in Niger. All of them have been asked to leave.

Analysts say that although regional and international sanctions to force the junta to reverse its coup have squeezed the country, they have also emboldened the military government as it consolidates its hold on power and seeks new partnerships. □

A brief history of the California Light House

(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

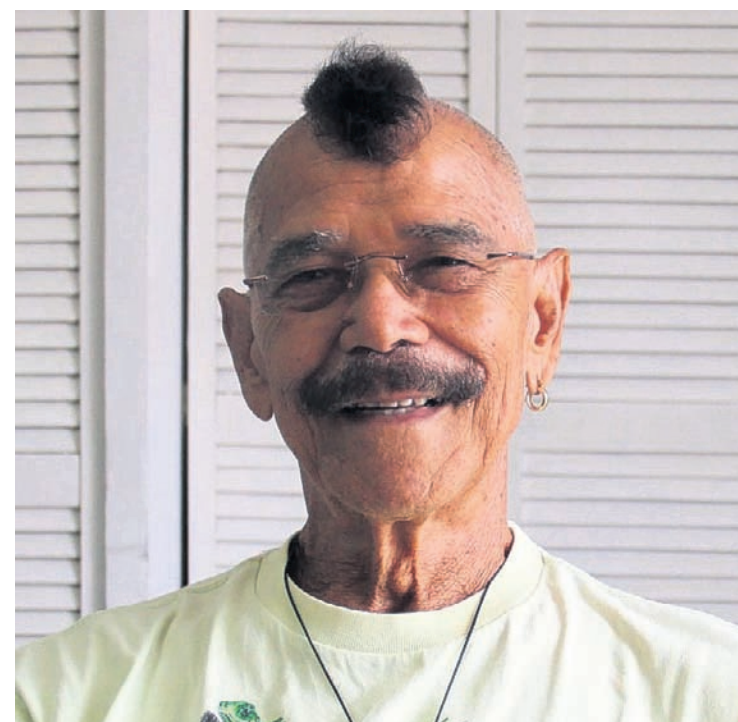
As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to

Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were the only means of transportation."

Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30 kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence



of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while

it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □



Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to Etnia Nativa, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algemesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands



of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, The History of Alto Vista by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife

Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteen century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into

a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the

cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

Experience Aruban culture with this exciting theme night featuring a Carnival show, mixology bar, local artists and more. You can sample Aruban cuisine, including delicious BBQ options with a tropical twist. A local brass band will be performing, and you can pose with elaborately dressed Carnival dancers for a memorable photo op as well, so don't miss it.

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Aruba to me



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likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Jennie Denicola.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is relaxing and fun things to do with great friends. Been coming here for over 24 years & we call this our away home!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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Aruba's most family-friendly beaches



(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow,

falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

**Eagle Beach/Palm Beach
in the hotel area**

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer

many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and

have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □

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LXXXII- 82 Aruba in December

ORANJESTAD — Every year December dresses Aruba in lights that shine everywhere and best expressed by the well-known Sero Preto or Black Hill, light decorated houses in San Nicolas. However Pasco or Christmas was not always celebrated this way on the island. Long before the introduction of electricity, there were customs and traditions that made the people of Aruba looking forward to "Pasco di Nacemento".

Weeks before Christmas, Arubans began cleaning and painting their houses. An ancient custom was also to tie three aloe leaves with a bright red ribbon and hang this charm on doors, doorways and windows to welcome the good spirits of peace and harmony into each home. Typical dishes were enjoyed as a family: Christmas ham, ayaca, goat stew, stuffed turkey and oliebol-len (a Dutch tradition). They drank chuculati di pin-da, which is hot milk sugar and mixed with grinded peanuts. The woman drank cream punch and the men had their rum or a native alcoholic beverage made out of agave called Cucuy. A liquor distilled from the fermented juices of the



head, body or leaves of Agave cocui ("green agave"), which used to be artisan and produced locally. Nowadays it is still being produced in the Venezuelan regions of Falcón and Lara. With a taste similar to other agave-based liquors such as tequila and mezcal, it is known as the Tequila of the Caquetios in Venezuela.

Families went to the Aurora Mass to demonstrate their Christian faith. It is called 'Aurora' because it is celebrated at the dawn of the new day. The cradle of Aruba's Christianity is found at the north coast of the island. This little chapel, named Alto Vista, has a lot of history that attracts many tourists year around

and for the Aruban population it's a place for veneration where they find peace and tranquility for their restless spirit. There are many stories related to the small chapel and the great Christian faith of the native Amerindians, such as one from 1760 mentioned in the books of the Alto Vista Chapel referred to Antonio Gregorio, an elderly neighbor of the place, very devout but at that time seriously ill, who before upon dying wanted to receive the holy sacrament given by catholic priest.

Antonio's wish seemed very difficult to fulfill since at that time there was no priest in Alto Vista. Neighbors, friends and relatives of Antonio gathered to pray in the chapel. Now after eight days of prayer, to everyone's surprise arrived an old Alto Vista neighbor who was returning from the mainland, Venezuela and was coming in the com-

pany of a priest, Father Maximiliano, which came to see the sick man and to give him the sacred oils on Christmas Eve before the elderly man passed away. Meanwhile, the Prosecutor's Office raised two flags on the flagstone on top of the hill to announce to the inhabitants of Alto Vista that something extraordinary was happening and people began to arrive from all sides for the occasion.

The priest greeted everyone with great cordiality, speaking of the importance of confession to receive the Holy Eucharist (Communion). At midnight, Father Maximiliano gave his first mass "Misa di Aurora". □

To get to know a little more regarding Aruba's and its cultural origins, etc. we highly recommend you to book your participation in our cultural encounter session. A mind opening revelation and entertaining island experience. Mail us at etnianativa03@gmail.com our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels.



Article by: Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to the high rise hotels



Did you know about...?

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called Did you know about...?, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is placa. Cents are called cen (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called Dos placa; 10-cent coins were called debchi; 25-cent coins were called diez placa and the 50-cent coin was once called Yotin (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban



artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism 10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Turtuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also

a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

the word “florin” supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word “florino”, both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.□

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Michelin-

1 Dull pain gelo work

5 Actor 42 Like
Willis cattails

10 Was 43 Corrals
bright

12 Admit

13 Fill in until
the boss
gets back

15 Squeeze
(out) pressure

16 In what
way to hide

17 Golf goal

18 Kind of
network

20 Despi-
cable

21 Forgo
frugality

22 Move
slowly

23 Put off

25 Outside:
Prefix

28 Command

31 Shop tools
32 Came
down

34 Uno plus
due

35 "— a
Wonderful
Life"

36 Game
cube

37 Maintain
one's
position

40 "The King"

L	A	S	T	E	G	R	E	T	
A	C	M	E		G	R	A	P	E
T	H	E	N		G	E	T	S	A
C	O	L	D	O	N	E		I	R
H	O	T	S	H	O	T		L	I
			B	I	G		D	O	N
C	A	C	A	O		B	A	N	G
O	M	A	R		B	O	W		
M	O	N		C	O	L	D	W	A
M	E	T		H	O	T	L	I	N
A	B	I	D	E	S		I	D	E
S	A	N	E	S	T		N	E	R
S	A	L	T	S		G	R	A	Y

Yesterday's answer

DOWN

1 Pale

2 Folds

under
pressure

3 Find a
place
to hide

4 Finish

5 Was

windy

6 Field
worker

7 Perfect
place

8 Reef
materials

9 Main
course

11 Flam-
mable gas

14 Talk at
length

19 Mulligans,
e.g.

20 "Rigoletto"
composer

24 Wiped off

25 Purim
honoree

26 Singer
King

27 Clock
topper

29 Salad
green

30 Control

33 Actions

35 Tiny

38 Pulled off

39 Trip
around
the track

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
10				11		12			
13				14					
15				16				17	
18			19			20			
	21					22			
			23			24			
25	26	27			28			29	30
31					32				33
34				35				36	
37			38					39	
40						41			
42								43	

12-5

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-5 CRYPTOQUOTE

YNKFWFJD NIJ WFAJ YMZRJ —

KVDEWX DUJJE, UFEP N YJU

CMED. — WJD ZNUDVC

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IN SEED TIME
LEARN, IN HARVEST TEACH, IN WINTER ENJOY.
— WILLIAM BLAKE

Bitcoin has surpassed \$41,000 for the first time since April 2022. What's behind the price surge?



A bitcoin symbol is presented on an LED screen during the closing ceremony of a congress for cryptocurrency investors in Santa Maria Mizata, El Salvador, Saturday, Nov. 20, 2021. (AP Photo/Salvador Melendez, File)

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Bitcoin is once again having a moment. On Monday, the world's largest cryptocurrency soared past \$41,000 for the first time in over a year and a half — and marking a 150% rise so far this year. Volatile bitcoin rocketed from just over \$5,000 at the start of the pandemic to nearly \$68,000 in November 2021, according to FactSet, a period marked by a surge in demand for technology products. Prices fell back to earth during an aggressive series of Federal Reserve rate hikes aimed at taming inflation and then the collapse of FTX, one of the biggest companies in crypto. When 2023 began, a single bitcoin could be had for less than \$17,000 after losing more than 75% of its value. Investors, however, began returning in large numbers as inflation started to cool. And the collapse of prominent tech-focused banks actually led more investors to turn to crypto as they bailed out of positions in Silicon Valley start-ups and other risky bets. But fueling this latest rally are prospects for the possible approval of spot bitcoin exchange traded funds — a

pooled investment security that can be bought and sold like stocks.

Industry advocates say this new way of investing in bitcoin at spot prices, instead of futures, could make it easier for anyone to enter the cryptoverse while lowering some of the well-documented risks associated with investing in cryptocurrencies. Regulators have previously rejected bitcoin spot ETF applications, but recent wins for some crypto fund managers have improved odds for a first approval, perhaps as soon as next month.

"The longer-term catalyst (for bitcoin) is a lot of optimism related to the potential approval of a spot ETF," Kaiko research analyst Riyadh Carey said Monday. He noted, however, that a regulatory green light doesn't promise continued gains. While analysts expect the potential approval of spot bitcoin ETFs to create a much larger pool of crypto investors, future volumes could go either way, Carey added. That could either boost or undermine bitcoin's value.

Bitcoin's current rally also arrives during an incredibly disruptive period for cryptocur-

rencies. Just last month, the U.S. government slapped Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange, with a \$4 billion fine as its founder Changpeng Zhao pleaded guilty to a felony charge. But Binance continues to operate and maintain its market share, Carey noted. In some ways, the company's settlement "propelled the market forward more by removing one of the ... more ominous overhangs that was a sort of a big question mark," he said, noting bitcoin's gains in the two weeks since the settlement was announced.

Despite the recent excitement around bitcoin, experts still maintain that crypto is a risky bet with wildly unpredictable fluctuations in value. In short, investors can lose money as quickly as they make it.

Last year's collapse of crypto-exchange giant FTX also "left a big scar" on the public's confidence in the crypto industry and crushed retail investors, Edward Moya, a former senior market analyst at Oanda, previously told The Associated Press — noting that institutional money, like hedge funds, are behind the bulk of current crypto investing.

Carey added that liquidity in cryptocurrency markets has yet to return to where it was before FTX collapsed, and lower liquidity can exacerbate price fluctuations.

"In the past few months, that has normally been the price moving up — but people should always be aware it can go in the reverse and quickly," he said.

As of around 1:30 p.m. Eastern time Monday, the price of bitcoin stood at \$41,709. The stocks of some other crypto players have also seen rises over recent months, but not with the same speed or heights as bitcoin. Ethereum, for example, stood at \$2,223 Monday afternoon, up 85% since the start of 2023. Meanwhile, Binance Coin and Dash are down about 5.25% and 24.37% for the year, respectively, with Monday afternoon prices of roughly \$231 and \$32.□

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24/7

Ohio Republicans propose nixing home grow, increasing taxes in sweeping changes to legal marijuana

By Samantha Hendrickson
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Banning marijuana growing at home, increasing the substance's tax rate and altering how those taxes get distributed are among vast changes Ohio Senate Republicans proposed Monday to a marijuana legalization measure approved by voters last month.

The changes emerged suddenly in committee just days before the new law is set to take effect, though their fate in the full Senate and the GOP-led House is still unclear. The ballot measure, dubbed Issue 2, passed on the Nov. 7 election with 57% of the vote and it set to become law this Thursday, making Ohio the 24th state to legalize marijuana for adult recreational use. But as a citizen-initiated statute, the Legislature is free to make tweaks on it, of which they're attempting plenty.

"The goal of this committee is to provide the people's wishes with a safe product," Sen. Michael Rulli, a Columbiana County Republican, said during a meeting of the Senate General Government Committee, where the changes were tacked onto an unrelated alcohol regulation bill.

Tom Haren, a spokesperson for the pro-Issue 2 cam-



Marijuana buds ready for harvest rest on a plant at AT-CPC of Ohio, Jan. 28, 2019, in Akron, Ohio.

(AP Photo/Tony Dejak, File)

paign Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol, harshly criticized the Senate rewrite.

"Some in the Ohio Senate propose to gut Issue 2's most important provisions, including home grow and social equity, and to put in place higher taxes that will entrench the illicit market and force Ohioans to continue to buy their cannabis products in Michigan," he said in a statement. "This is not what voters wanted."

The Senate changes still have a long way to go, however. If they clear the Senate floor, the Republican-majority House, which leans more in favor of overall recreational marijuana legalization than the Senate, would still have to agree to the many changes. GOP Gov. Mike DeWine, who has supported going along with at least the basics approved by voters,

also must sign off on them. Senate changes would prohibit growing marijuana at home, a departure from provisions approved by voters that allow individual Ohioans to grow up to six plants at home and up to 12 per household. The Senate's proposal also would increase the approved tax on marijuana products of 10% to 15%. Cultivators would also be

taxed at that rate under the revisions.

Tax revenue would go toward general state funding, law enforcement training, substance abuse treatment and prevention and safe driving training. Under the original statute, that revenue would have gone to local governments hosting dispensaries and a social equity program supporting those who wish to break into the cannabis industry. □

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20 years after 'Sideways,' Paul Giamatti may finally land his first best actor Oscar nomination

By Jake coyle
Associated Press

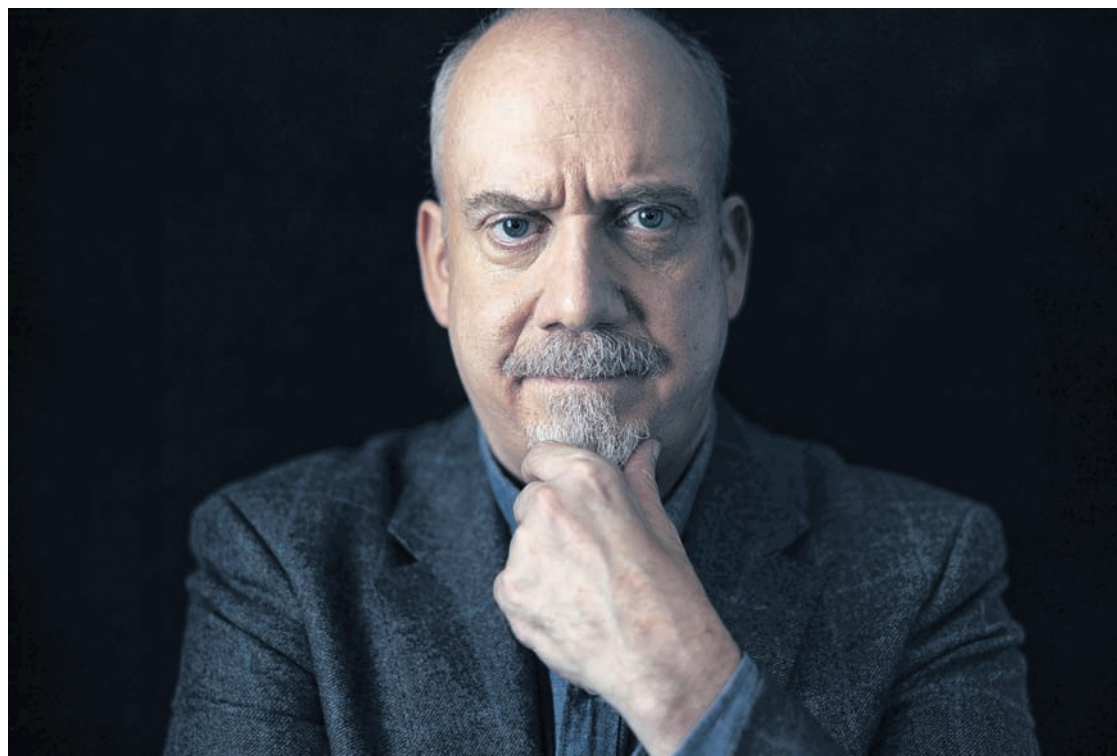
NEW YORK (AP) — When Paul Giamatti made "Sideways" with Alexander Payne, he stayed in a little house in the middle of a large vineyard. At the end of a day of shooting, he would drive home in darkness, with the California hills around him.

Giamatti was then a respected character actor, but this was one of his first times as the lead. And he couldn't believe it.

"I remember Alexander saying, 'You two guys are going to do it,'" recalls Giamatti of himself and Thomas Hayden Church. "And we were like, 'Seriously?'"

In the years since, Giamatti, 56, has remained a leading man, albeit an unlikely one. His ability to carry a movie is now, well, kind of obvious. That goes for indie gems like "Private Life" and "Win Win" or acclaimed series like "John Adams" and "Billions."

But two decades later, "Sideways" remains lodged



in Giamatti's memory. "I remember every second of making it," he said on a recent afternoon in Manhattan. Wide as his travels have been since — "Hamlet" at Yale, Jerry Heller in "Straight Outta Compton," seven years on "Billions" — he's not experienced anything quite like the natural, ensemble feel of

"Sideways." Until, that is, he reteamed with Payne for "The Holdovers."

"I've never done anything like it again," says Giamatti, "except this is the closest thing to it."

"The Holdovers," playing in theaters and available digitally, marks the long-incoming reunion of Giamatti and Payne. Just as in

"Sideways," their alchemy produces something wry and moving. The setting — a 1970s boarding school — has moved from California sunshine to snowy New England, and from pinot to whisky.

But a faint connection between the two movies is there. Giamatti plays Paul Hunham, an irascible clas-

sics professor, widely disliked by his students, who's forced to spend Christmas break with a handful of students.

The movie, a broad comedy at first, peels away a tender humanistic drama around the trio of Hunham, a bright, less well-off student (Dominic Sessa) and the school's grieving head cook (Da'Vine Joy Randolph).

For Giamatti, the book-ends of "Sideways" and "The Holdovers" inevitably prompt reflection on the distance he's traveled in the intervening decades.

"All the stuff in between, I mean the life changes, the professional stuff — it's just insane. My whole life changed. I got divorced. Massive change," Giamatti says. "I never talked to Alexander about this, but I thought there were similarities between the two characters. But it's a guy 20 years on from the other guy. And probably there's a lot of me 20 years on going into it." □



Actor Jonathan Majors arrives at court for a trial on his domestic violence case, Monday, Dec. 4, 2023, in New York.
(AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura)

By Jake Offenhartz
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jonathan Majors listened silently, head-cocked and eyes down, as a Manhattan prosecutor and his defense attorney offered competing accounts of a violent confrontation in the backseat of a car that led to assault charges against the film star and put his rapid Hollywood ascent on

pause.

The opening statements Monday in the trial against Majors centered on whether the actor assaulted his former girlfriend, Grace Jabbari, after she read a romantic text message sent to his phone by another woman. Prosecutors say Majors grabbed the woman's hand so hard he fractured her middle finger, then twisted her arm be-

Jonathan Majors assault trial starts with competing versions of a backseat confrontation

hind her back and struck her on the side of the head — the latest outburst in an alleged pattern of physical and emotional abuse. An attorney for Majors argued that her client was the true victim, claiming he was left bloodied by the attack, while she spent the rest of the night clubbing.

That the competing versions of the struggle were presented to a jury was itself unusual, a rare instance of a misdemeanor assault case going to trial. For Majors, a 34-year-old rising star, the stakes may be higher than the one year in prison he could face if convicted. In her opening statements, the actor's attorney, Priya Chaudhry, described the allegations as a revenge

plot to "ruin Jonathan Majors and take away everything he has spent his whole life working for."

Pointing to Majors' breakout roles in "Creed III" and his emergence as a key supervillain in the Marvel multiverse, Chaudhry said her client's career "seemed unstoppable until he ended his relationship with Ms. Jabbari and she, hours later, made these false allegations."

Since his arrest in March, an ad campaign for the U.S. Army featuring Majors has been pulled and the release of "Magazine Dreams," a Sundance award-winning filming that he starred in, has been postponed.

In his own opening state-

ments, assistant district attorney Michael Perez described the alleged assault as the culmination of a "cruel and manipulative pattern of psychological and physical abuse" that Majors directed at his partner of two years.

The trial, he said, would show that Majors "demanded total compliance" from his girlfriend, at one point telling her that she needed to model herself after Michelle Obama or Coretta Scott King. If she didn't meet that standard — by staying out late with friends or going to a music festival, for example — Majors would often become angry, throwing household objects or shouting at her, the prosecutor said. □

Chourio gets \$82 million, 8-year deal with Brewers, largest before a player's big league debut

By Ronald Blum
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Before taking a single swing in the major leagues, Jackson Chourio landed the type of contract players spend years dreaming about.

"I'm definitely going to meet the expectations," the 19-year-old outfielder said Monday after the Milwaukee Brewers finalized an \$82 million, eight-year deal, the most money guaranteed to a player with no big league experience.

"There's definitely a little bit of pressure on this, but I'm just going to work really hard," Chourio said through a translator. "This money is not going to change me. If something changes, it definitely will be for the better." Milwaukee also agreed to an \$8.5 million, one-year contract to retain left-hander Wade Miley, a deal that includes a 2025 mutual option and could be worth \$24 million over two seasons. Miley gets a \$7 million salary this year and the option is for \$12 million with a \$1.5 million buyout. He can earn \$2.5 million each year in performance bonuses for innings: \$250,000 each for 50 and 75, \$500,000 for 100



Milwaukee Brewers outfielder Jackson Chourio responds to questions following a news conference at the Major League Baseball winter meetings Monday, Dec. 4, 2023, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP Photo/George Walker IV)

and \$750,000 for 125. He has a 10-team limited no-trade provision and would get a one-time \$1 million assignment bonus if traded. Chourio has played only six games above Double-A. His agreement topped the previous high for a player with no big league experience — excluding Japanese professionals — set when outfielder Luis Robert signed a

\$50 million, six-year contract with the Chicago White Sox on Jan. 2, 2020, ahead of his debut on July 24 of that year. Chourio could start the 2024 season in the major leagues. The deal covers his entire period of arbitration eligibility and what potentially would have been his first two seasons after free agency. Milwaukee is starting its first

season under manager Pat Murphy following the departure of Craig Counsell, who left to manage the Chicago Cubs.

"It's not just about us. It's about him as well and securing his future, partnering together with somebody that is really special," Brewers general manager Matt Arnold said. "And so when you have an agreement like

that, it's a great day for everybody involved."

Chourio is regarded as among baseball's top prospects. Although he doesn't turn 20 until March 11, Chourio has advanced rapidly enough in the Brewers' farm system that he played six games for Triple-A Nashville late this past season.

He's the first player in Brewers franchise history to be selected as the organization's minor league player of the year twice. Chourio, from Maracaibo, Venezuela, signed for a \$1.8 million bonus at age 16 in January 2021. He batted .283 with a .338 on-base percentage, 22 homers, 91 RBIs and 44 steals in 128 combined games with Double-A Biloxi and Triple-A Nashville in 2023. He hit .288 with a .342 on-base percentage, 20 homers, 75 RBIs and 16 steals in 99 combined games with Class A Carolina and Wisconsin, and Biloxi in 2022. His 18-year-old brother Jaiison signed with Cleveland for a \$1.2 million bonus in January 2022 and hit .321 with one homer, 25 RBIs and 20 stolen bases with the Arizona Complex League Guardians and Class A Lynchburg. □

US players are excited about a fresh start under new coach Emma Hayes after a difficult year

By Anne m. Peterson
Associated Press

(AP) — Although Emma Hayes hasn't yet assumed her new role as coach of the U.S. women's national team, she's been involved behind the scenes as the team wraps up a turbulent year and looks forward to an eventful 2024. Hayes is currently coaching Chelsea in the Women's Super League and won't join the United States until May, a short time before the Americans play in the Paris Olympics. She visited the team last week as they prepared for a pair of exhibition matches

against China. The U.S. defeated the Steel Roses 3-0 in the first match on Saturday in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The second match is set for Tuesday in Frisco, Texas. Hayes' fresh perspective is welcomed, especially after the United States was eliminated from the Women's World Cup this summer by Sweden. The Round of 16 exit was the earliest ever for the four-time World Cup champions. "I think we'll learn a lot from her and she'll learn a lot from us," defender Emily Fox said. Hayes consulted with interim coach Twila Kilgore and

U.S. Soccer Sporting Director Matt Crocker on the team's roster for the final two games of the year. The U.S. left veterans Alex Morgan, Crystal Dunn, Becky Sauerbrunn and Alyssa Naeher off the squad in favor of taking a look at younger players.

"This camp is — honestly, we've been saying it's kind of starting fresh because of the World Cup and everything. Emma, being able to meet her, and obviously having new faces in camp, younger faces," forward Trinity Rodman said after Saturday's game. "I think it's just building an under-



Chelsea manager Emma Hayes arrives ahead of the Women's Super League soccer match against Liverpool, at Stamford Bridge, in London, Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023.

(John Walton/PA via AP)

standing, creating an identity and executing a game plan."

Defender Naomi Girma echoed the sentiment that Hayes' arrival is something of a fresh start.

After the lackluster perfor-

mance by the Americans at the Women's World Cup, U.S. Soccer parted ways with coach Vlatko Andonovski. Kilgore, one of his assistants, was named interim coach. Hayes was appointed last month. □

Eagles sign 3-time All-Pro linebacker Shaquille Leonard to 1-year deal

By Dan Gelston
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Philadelphia Eagles signed three-time All-Pro linebacker Shaquille Leonard to a contract on Monday for the rest of the season.

Leonard should be available to play for the defending NFC champion Eagles (10-2) on Sunday night against Dallas. Leonard visited with both the Eagles and Cowboys after the Colts waived him late last month.

He complained publicly about decreased playing time this season with the Colts. He could make an immediate impact for an Eagles team trying to get back to the Super Bowl.

Leonard has been slowed by injuries, but should help an Eagles defense that has struggled each of the past two weeks, including a blowout loss Sunday to San Francisco. The 49ers scored touchdowns on six straight possessions and the Bills had more than 500 yards in Philadelphia's win in Week 12. Indianapolis took Leonard with the 36th overall draft pick in 2018.

Leonard led the league with a franchise-record 163



New England Patriots running back Ezekiel Elliott (15) pulls in a pass reception as Indianapolis Colts linebacker Shaquille Leonard (53) covers in the first half of an NFL football game in Frankfurt, Germany Sunday, Nov. 12, 2023.

(AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

tackles. He won the AP NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year Award in 2018. Eagles coach Nick Sirianni was Indianapolis' offensive coordinator when Leonard played for the Colts.

"He had a knack for the football and how to get the football," Sirianni said. "What I remember is just how, as an offensive coordinator, how hard he was

to throw around. His length was comparable to Jim Boeheim's 2-3 zone at Syracuse. He's going to make a play in the passing lane." Leonard joined left guard Quenton Nelson as the first rookie teammates to be selected first team All-Pro since Hall of Famers Dick Butkus and Gale Sayers (Bears) in 1965. It was only the start.

Leonard made three All-Pro teams and three Pro Bowls in his first four seasons, becoming one of the league's most feared defenders. He was rewarded in 2021 with a five-year contract extension worth \$99.25 million, which made him the NFL's highest-paid off-the-ball linebacker. He was best known for his ability to chase down op-

ponents and his penchant for creating turnovers.

But even though he appeared to be his usual self in 2021, leading the league in forced fumbles (eight), he was hurting. Leonard played through significant leg pain, which was later determined to be a nerve injury that required back surgery before the 2022 season.

Leonard missed Indy's first three games and in his season debut, he suffered a concussion and a fractured nose in a violent collision with teammate Zaire Franklin. Leonard missed three more games, returned for two more and then had season-ending back surgery to again repair the nerve.

Later, he admitted he came back too soon, so Indy played it safe this season.

Leonard had 614 tackles, 32 for loss, 31 passes defended, 17 forced fumbles, 15 sacks, 12 interceptions, seven fumble recoveries and one touchdown in 5 1/2 seasons with the Colts. This year, he had 65 tackles in nine games but no sacks, interceptions, forced fumbles or fumble recoveries. □



Argentina's Lionel Messi and teammates celebrate their team's 1-0 victory over Brazil at the end of a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2023.

(AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

By Paul Newberry
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Fourteen U.S. cities will play host to Copa América next summer, with the semifinals at East Rutherford, New Jersey, and Charlotte, North Carolina, ahead of the July 14 championship in Miami

Gardens, Florida.

The governing bodies of South America and of North and Central America and the Caribbean made the announcement Monday, filling in the cities that will be part of the 16-team tournament.

The quarterfinals will be

Copa América semifinals in New Jersey and Charlotte, among 14 U.S. cities hosting next summer

held July 4 at NRG Stadium in Houston; July 5 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas; and July 6 at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, and Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas.

The semifinals will be in New Jersey's MetLife Stadium on July 9 and Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium the next day. The third-place game will be in Charlotte on July 13, the eve of the final.

The draw is set for Thursday in Miami. This will be only the second time Copa América has been held outside of South America since the inaugural tournament in 1916.

"These venues are world-

class and have passionate fans who are renowned for getting behind major events," CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani said in a statement.

CONMEBOL and CONCACAF announced last month that the June 20 opening game will be at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, while South Florida's Hard Rock Stadium landed the final.

The other sites revealed Monday: SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California; Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California; Exploria Stadium in Orlando, Florida; Q2 Stadium in Austin, Texas; and two facilities in the Kansas City metro area: Arrow-

head Stadium in Missouri and smaller Children's Mercy Park on the Kansas side of the border.

Copa América is expanding in 2024, with six teams from North America joining the usual 10 nations from South America that compete for the continental championship. The format mirrors the Copa América Centenario in 2016, the only previous time the tournament was staged outside of South America.

"We will experience an unforgettable Copa América, enjoying the best football in the world in 14 magnificent stadiums," said Alejandro Dominguez, the president of CONMEBOL. □